

HAMBURG LETTER

[FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.]

Hamburg, 7th April.

AT AUSTRO-CHINESE BANK.

Rumour having been circulated lately of the proposed establishment of an Austro-Chinese Bank in Vienna, the *Neue Freie Presse* in an article on the subject remarks that the slow development of the trade of the Austro-Hungarian empire with countries beyond the sea cannot be denied and is to a great extent due to the absence of Austrian financial institutions abroad. This has, no doubt, suggested the idea of an Austro-Chinese Bank, but the scheme is still in an embryonic stage and it would be difficult to state even the barest outlines of it with any degree of accuracy. It is reported that it originated with an eminent merchant, who for many years has been in business in China and is thoroughly conversant with the trade and conditions of the country, and that the Government fully recognising its importance has sent the gentleman out to the East for the purpose of studying the chances of success of such an undertaking on the spot. As he only left a few weeks ago no report can possibly have been received so far.

If rumours are to be believed, the capital of the company will be fixed at 25,000,000 kronen to be raised partly in commercial and industrial circles at home, partly amongst the Austro-Hungarian residents in China; even native financial magnates may be invited to subscribe. The Austrian Government is said to be prepared to lend the enterprise its full support either by taking part in it or by guaranteeing a certain rate of interest to the shareholders for a limited period. Should any native bankers join, some of them would probably be asked to assist in the management of the concern, it being proposed to have a board of directors in China as well as in Vienna. Tientsin is mentioned as the seat of the head office, but Peking is also named and the opening of branch establishments in other commercial centres of the country may be expected in time.

The principal object of the proposed company will be the promoting and fostering of the trade with Austria by making liberal advances on Austrian goods. They will at the same time take up and engage in any other business connected with banking.

As soon as the idea shall have assumed a more and more definite shape, it is said that a prominent financial establishment in Vienna will be entrusted with the working out of the scheme, details of which, as stated above, are still but vaguely conceived and certainly subject to alterations in several directions.

THE N.D.L. AND THEIR DOCK PORTERS.

A permanent rupture of the peaceful relations existing between the North German Lloyd and their dock porters at Bremerhaven for over ten years, has been averted by the firm get conciliatory attitude taken up by the former. It appears, according to the *Weser Zeitung*, from which I take the following account, that the dockers of the Company have been in the habit of paying higher wages than is customary in any other German port with the object of securing a permanent body of experienced and reliable hands and have refrained from all interference with the politics of the men. This the Socialists have taken advantage of to bring the latter under their influence and to instil a spirit of discontent and insubordination which could not but lead to a trial of strength in the end. The dismissal of a workman owing to a serious dispute with one of the foremen, who had been in the employ of the company for many years, afforded the desired opportunity and 700 men struck work. Out of consideration for a number of old and resident hands, who had been induced to join the movement, the Company decided to meet the men by according to the request of their delegates to postpone the dismissal of the delinquent until after the finding of the court before which he had been summoned (he has since been sentenced to pay a fine of M. 60— or in default to 12 days' imprisonment). Instead of frankly acknowledging the forbearance of the Company the Socialistic press and its followers raised a shout of triumph, asserting, which was not true, that the foreman was to receive notice if the verdict of the court should be in favour of the men.

The Company perceiving the intention of the party to force on a contest, at once took precautionary measures. They fitted up a steamer as a barracks-ship at Norddeich, keeping another in reserve at Bremerhaven, in order to warn the men that they were prepared to resist any attempt at coercion. The Socialistic press averred upon this, that the Company wished to provoke a general strike amongst the men; but if such had been their intention they might have availed themselves of the opportunity immediately the 700 hands laid down their work. On the contrary their aim was to avert a strike and in order to attain their object they avoided all harsh measures, proceeding slowly step by step. They began by dismissing the two delegates, who had denied the accuracy of the statement published by them. A few days later the "gangs" which the men had hitherto been allowed to make up themselves, were broken up, mixed gangs of unionists and non-unionists being formed by the steredores instead. The hands will be acquiesced in this arrangement in spite of the outcry of the Socialistic leaders. The Company then declared that they were about to start a pension fund and to contribute 100,000 marks (25,000) towards it, but that only non-unionists would be admitted; should others wish to join they would have to sever their connection with the societies by handing their books of membership in at the office of the North German Lloyd. 950 men accepted these terms, not a few of them expressing their satisfaction at being released from the tyranny of leaders which had become unbearable. The

Company had now about 1,100 men willing to work at their disposal, whilst of the few hundred who had not come in, many had probably already left the place some time ago and were engaged in fieldwork in the country. About ninety had rendered themselves particularly conspicuous in the attempted movement and those the Company in the interest of the maintenance of peace thought it desirable to eliminate. Still, as some of these were old hands and fathers of families, they limited the number of dismissals to 47, mostly younger men or such as had shown special animosity.

The North German Lloyd has thus gained its point, a protracted strike has been averted and a strong nucleus of willing and mostly old experienced hands has been formed, who in spite of the temporary defection of some of them in the past, may be looked upon as reliable for the future.

The success of the Company is in part due to the extensive arrangements made by them to bring up men from the interior in case of a prolonged struggle. A thousand men were kept in readiness in Essen and Breslau to be conveyed by special trains to Bremerhaven in case of need, and there was no lack of applicants, anxious to earn the high wages obtaining in Bremerhaven.

The *Weser Zeitung* thinks that the North German Lloyd has once more proved its desire to maintain the amicable relations formerly existing between employer and employed greatly to the advantage of both, though principally to that of the latter.

ON THE PLEASURES OF BEING ARRESTED IN JAPAN.

[BY R. C. FILLINGHAM, VICAR OF HEXTON.]

Perhaps I should rather term it "the dangers of travelling with an amateur photographer"—an enthusiastic amateur photographer.

New, I would not give much for a man without a hobby—his life is so excessively prosaic and colorless. A hobby is, indeed, a madness of a sort, but we are all a little mad—yet, a worthy sir, who are absolutely content in this wonderful universe with being a successful man of business, and want nothing more, are the maddest of all of us. I confess to being a little mad on certain points such as visiting uninhabited islands and collecting pencils. And my friend Slapshot with whom I have just been travelling up country, is quite mad on the subject of photography, but it is as a rule a pleasant, useful madness, and Slapshot is an excellent fellow and a good travelling companion.

For he is not one of those dreadful people who, when they go up country in Japan, load themselves with tinmed meats and curry powders and loaves of bread—No, Sir. When Slapshot and I go into the interior of Japan our souls (and stomachs) roar up alive such conventional provisions. We eat raw fish and seaweed and bamboo and all the rest of it with infinite gusto, and never have even a secret longing for European food. So we have the exquisite pleasure of despising our fellow creatures, and as we squat at our little trays in country inns we say to each other: "I wish faggot-like were with us—how uncomfortable he would be!" "I should like to see Mrs. Gottabody trying to manage the chopsticks—why, she'd starve," and so on.

Therefore, Slapshot is just the right sort of travelling companion, and his mania for the camera is, as I said, pleasing—except when it reaches the point of dangerous lunacy. It did at Miyajima. He knew that photography was strictly forbidden, but his desire to photograph the chateaux he slept in became almost uncontrollable. "My dear fellow, you'll certainly have the police upon us if you do it," I said. "I don't care—four battalions of soldiers shan't stop me," he cried, raging. And I could only prevent him by the threat of instantly warning the local policeman to shadow him as long as we were in the place.

The crisis came at the peaceful little town of Ishimi, about five miles from Shimomaki. We had travelled that morning from Kawatana, the place of hot springs, and halted there for the midday meal. The moment we arrived, leaving me to order the food, Slapshot flew excitedly down the street with his camera, anxious not to lose a moment from his hobby, and by and bye returned triumphantly, informing me that he had got some splendid views. His triumph was short-lived. We had scarcely sat down to our meal when a little policeman arrived and informed us that my friend had been guilty of a crime—he had been taking photographs in a prohibited district. We produced maps and vigorously asserted that we were, as we believed, outside the line—but it was no use, we were within it. We declared that no notice-board was up to warn us—and if there was one it was entirely in Chinese characters, and so unintelligible to the European traveller. None of these things moved the little policeman. I fancy he had never in his life had the chance of arresting two burly foreigners, and he was going to make the most of it—promotion loomed in his vision. Slapshot offered finally to break his plates, but even this did not satisfy the little policeman, and we found to our dismay that we were verily and truly under arrest, and must go to the nearest police station—and that turned out to be six miles behind us. We remonstrated; we pointed out that we were due at Shimomaki; we offered to allow ourselves to be arrested at that place; but all was useless. The little policeman was extremely polite; he

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awed and smiled constantly; but he was very firm too, and kept reiterating that we must go. Meanwhile the entire population of the village had collected outside the hotel, and were viewing with great curiosity the hardened desperadoes whom the heroic policeman had so gallantly taken in charge. This hero retained his composure to the last; he did not hurry us; he let us finish our meal and our smoke as leisurely as we wished, and left us alone to do it; but he kept an eye on us and walked solemnly up and down in front of the hotel, not unconscious of the respectful admiration of the populace. At last we went off in a lugubrious procession, the little policeman's *kebona* leading the way. As we passed through villages, people turned and bowed with awe to the policeman and regarded us with horror and scorn. I confess that I felt decidedly foolish, being hailed off in this ignominious manner, and stared at as a criminal of the deepest dye. In my heart I mustered Slapshot's hobby, and was quite glad that rain had come on and enabled me to retire beneath an umbrella from the popular gaze.

At last we reached the police station at Kogoshimada. Again, all with perfect courtesy, we were smiled at and handed chairs. Deep consultations took place among the officials, and we certainly wondered what was going to happen. Slapshot got into a sledge, and wanted me to say all kinds of irrelevant things. He produced the map repeatedly; he produced his card; he produced his passport. This the head official perused very carefully upside down—still he noticed a smile on Slapshot's face, and found that the lion and unicorn, which surmounted the document, were standing on their heads.

We were presently informed gravely that we were liable to a month's confinement, and from the tone in which it was said we really thought that something disagreeable was going to ensue. However, the issue of the matter was not solitary imprisonment, but an order to break all the plates. Slapshot made gestures of despair, but had to obey. He went into the back yard and solemnly comminuted the work of destruction all over the place, till it was absolutely sandal with plates. The temptation, the well, but he reflected that the silver emission from the glass would probably poison the entire police force if they made their *cho* from the water, so he nobly refrained. And we departed in peace.

Now, I wonder whether this story has a moral, and if so, what it is? I don't know myself. Is it to moderate your hobbies, or is it always to inquire at police stations in Japan whether you may photograph or not? Or is it to learn to read the Chinese characters? You, my dear sir, must decide.—*Kobe Chronicle*.

LATEST STEAMER MOVEMENTS.

The M.M. steamer *Oceanic*, with the next French mail, will leave Saigon to-day, at 3 p.m. for this port.

The C.P.R. steamer *Atchafalpa* arrived at Kobe at 5.30 a.m. on the 11th inst., and left again at 7 p.m. same day, via Nagasaki, for Shanghai, when she is due to arrive at 3 a.m. on the 15th inst.

The A.L. steamer *China* left Moji for this port on the 11th inst.

The N.Y.K. steamer *Wakasa Maru* (Europe line) left Shanghai for this port on the 11th inst. at 8 p.m., and is expected here tomorrow.

The P. & O. steamer *Canton* left Singapore for this port on the 12th inst. at 8 a.m.

The H.A.L. steamer *Argonia*, from Hamburg, left Singapore for this port on the 10th inst. a.m., and may be expected here on the 16th inst. a.m.



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